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SUBJECT: ITALY SITREP: EARTHQUAKE DEATH TOLL RISES TO 179

REF: ROME 00392

Death Toll Rising, Aftershocks Continue

1. (U) The death toll from Monday morning's earthquake in Abruzzo has risen to 179, with 34 still missing. Additionally, 1,500 are injured and 17,000 homeless, including 10,000 in the region's capital L'Aquila (total population 80,000). Thus far, 100 people have been rescued from the rubble. A series of aftershocks continue to rock Abruzzo, the strongest one hitting 4.8 on the Richter Scale early Tuesday morning. The Rome-L'Aquila highway has partially reopened, with only heavy trucks still barred. Most of the train lines that were closed yesterday have now reopened after inspections by engineers.

No American Citizen Casualties

2. (U) As of 1200 local time, there are still no American citizens among the dead, injured or those officially listed as missing. The Embassy Consular Section received about 25 injuries regarding welfare and whereabouts of American citizens, all of whom have been accounted for.

Students among the Dead and Missing

3. (U) The press is reporting that three students have been found dead, including one Greek student. Media reports also indicate that some university students (one Israeli, one Palestinian and an undefined number of Italians) are still thought to be trapped under the rubble of a student dormitory in L'Aquila. Seventy Israelis--mostly Israeli Arabs--were studying medicine in L'Aquila. The Embassy of Israel confirmed that one student is still missing and is helping repatriate the others back to Israel. We have no/no reports of any American citizen students in the earthquake area.

GOI Reaction

4. (U) Prime Minister Berlusconi announced that the government allocated 30 million euro for immediate needs and more funds from the EU disaster funds will follow. Berlusconi told the press that 35 countries have offered assistance, but that thus far Italy has sufficient resources. Berlusconi also announced the government's intention to build a new town in the vicinity of L'Aquila to provide housing for those displaced. This town could be completed in 24-28 months.

USG Assistance

5. (SBU) The Italian press is now reporting the 50,000 dollars the US government will provide in immediate aide. Post officers will meet with representatives of the Italian Red Cross to review the grant agreement. The Embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation offered US military assistance to the Italian Joint Operations Command, which indicated that thus

far Italian assets have been sufficient. American residents in Italy have offered their volunteer assistance, but thus far GOI has declined all such offers from non-professionals.

¶6. (U) The Italian media reported extensively on President Obama's statement of condolences from his trip in Turkey, as well as the comments from the Department's spokesman. There are also press reports of a condolence call from Speaker Pelosi.

¶7. (U) Embassy Rome will continue to monitor the situation.
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